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War By Another Name

An Address to the Commonwealth Club of California
by Robert M. Gates, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
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The most divisive and controversial part of American foreign policy for nearly four decades has been our effort in the Third World to preserve and defend pro-Western governments, to resist Communist aggression and subversion, and to promote economic development and democracy.

Our continuing difficulty in formulating a coherent and sustainable bipartisan strategy for the Third World over two generations contrasts sharply with the Soviet Union's relentless effort there to eliminate Western influence, establish strategically located client Communist states, and to gain access to strategic resources.

But while we may debate strategy and how to respond, the facts of Soviet involvement in major Third World conflicts are undeniable. Consider two very painful memories:

-- It is clear that the Soviet Union, and Stalin personally, played a central role in prompting North Korea's invasion of the South in 1950,the cause of our

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first great post-war strategic debate over strategy in the Third World.

-- Although the strategic consequences of a victory by North Vietnam were hotly debated in the US, we now see the Soviet Navy well entrenched in the great naval base at Cam Ranh Bay, and Vietnam's economic and military dependence on the Soviet Union; we recall the Soviet military supplyline that made Hanoi's victory possible, and remember Soviet help in the conquest of Laos and Cambodia. The resulting human suffering in Southeast Asia was even more horrifying than predicted.

Somehow many Americans thought their first loss of a major foreign war -- Vietnam -- would have no important consequences, especially inasmuch as it was accompanied by so-called "detente" with the Soviet Union and the opening to China. Yet, it was in fact a major watershed in post World War II history, especially as it coincided with the collapse of Portugal's colonial empire in Africa; revolutions in Iran, Ethiopia and Nicaragua; and Congressional actions in the mid-1970s cutting off all US assistance to the non-Communist forces in Angola, thus signaling the withdrawal of American support for opponents of Marxist-Leninist forces in the Third World.

The effects of American defeat in Vietnam, the revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua, and the coming to power of bitterly

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antagonistic and aggressively destabilizing governments in all three countries undermined the confidence of US friends and allies in the Third World (not to mention in Europe and Japan) and ensured that an opportunistic Soviet Union would see in the Third World its principal foreign policy opportunities for years to come.

And they moved aggressively to create or exploit such opportunities. Throughout the Third World, the Soviet Union and its clients for the past ten years have incited violence and disorder and sponsored subversion of neutral or pro-Western governments in El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, various Caribbean States, Chad, Sudan, Suriname, North Yemen, Oman, Pakistan, New Caledonia, South Korea, Grenada, and many others. The Soviet Union has affixed itself as a parasite to legitimate nationalist, anticolonial movements or to those who have overthrown repressive or incompetent regimes and tried wherever possible to convert or consolidate them into Marxist-Leninist dictatorships as in Nicaragua, Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. And now these same regimes in the process of consolidating power are fighting their own people. Open warfare by invading Communist armies is being waged in Cambodia and Afghanistan. And in most instances of state support for terrorism, the government involved is tied in some way to the USSR.

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These contemporary challenges to international order and stability -- and to democratic values -- certainly grow primarily out of localized and specific circumstances. To be sure, there are local economic, social, racial, human rights and other injustices. And many -- too many -- governments have demonstrated their capacity to inflict hardship and violence on their own people. But, that said, we cannot close our eyes to a common theme across the entire Third World and that is the pervasively destructive role of the Soviet Union and its clients.

In 1919, Trotsky said that, "The road to London and Paris lies through Calcutta." This conviction that the West could more easily and effectively be weakened and made vulnerable through the Third World than by direct confrontation remains central to Soviet foreign policy. And if you question how critical this is for Moscow, remember that the Soviets allowed detente with the US, which was highly advantageous to them, to founder substantially with successive Presidents in the 1970s because the USSR refused to moderate its aggressive pursuit of Third World opportunities -- in Angola, Ethiopia, Nicaragua and Afghanistan.

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Subversion, Violence and Repression

In the mid-1970s, new Soviet tactics in the Third World, combined with historic events and opportunities, emerged to challenge Western presence, progress toward democracy and sound economic development in the Third World. The new tactics were designed to minimize the chance of a repetition of disastrous setbacks such as their expulsion from Egypt in 1972 and the ouster of a Marxist regime in Chile in 1973. The strategy had five parts:

-- First, the cornerstone of the new Soviet approach was the use of Cuban forces to establish and sustain the power of "revolutionary governments". They first helped consolidate radical power in Angola. This was followed by the dispatch of thousands of Cuban troops to Ethiopia where that regime also became dependent on their support.

This tactic of using Third World Communist or radical states as surrogates in the Third World subsequently involved assisting Vietnam's conquest of the remainder of Indochina, Libya's designs in Chad and plotting against Sudan, South Yemen's aggression against Oman and North Yemen, and Cuba's support for regimes in Nicaragua, Grenada and Suriname as well as the insurgency in El Salvador.

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-- Second, when radical governments came to power without the aid of foreign troops, as in Nicaragua, Soviets directly or through their surrogates such as East Germany helped in the establishment of an internal security structure to ensure that any possible challenge from within would be stamped out.

-- Third, the Soviets continued to supplement these tactics with more traditional offerings such as technical and political training in the USSR, the rapid supply of weapons, and the use of a wide range of covert actions to support friends and to help defeat or destabilize unfriendly challengers or governments.

-- Fourth, the USSR proved in Afghanistan that it would still be willing to launch its own forces at targets on its periphery -- and perhaps elsewhere -- when and if circumstances are right.

-- Fifth, and finally, the Soviets advised new radical regimes to mute their revolutionary rhetoric and to try to keep their links to Western commercial resources, foreign assistance and international financial institutions. Soviet ambitions did not cloud their recognition that they could not afford more economic dependents such as Cuba and Vietnam.

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Soviet support for the radical regimes that it has helped established has been sustained. The Soviets and their East European allies have provided military and economic assistance to Nicaragua over the past five years approaching $2.5 billion dollars. Compare this with the highly controversial $100 million American program to assist the resistance in that country. The Soviets have provided a full range of military weapons and support and also have become Nicaragua's major source of economic aid. They are attempting to shore up a Nicaraguan economy rapidly deteriorating because of slumping industrial and agricultural production, falling export earnings and cutbacks in Western funding. The Soviet Union has replaced Mexico as Nicaragua's primary supplier of oil.

In Angola, total Communist military and economic assistance now stands at almost $3.5 billion, most of it since 1984. Almost all of that assistance is military. The Soviets are not particularly generous, however, and because Angola in the past has had the ability to pay, the Soviets and Cubans have required payment for material and technicians in hard currency, thus adding to the country's economic problems.

It is in Afghanistan, however, that the full measure of Soviet ambitions in the Third World can be taken most clearly. More than 100,000 Soviet troops are in Afghanistan, with more than a million troops having served. The cost to Afghanistan

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has been high. Some four million people, more than a quarter of the population, have had to flee their country. Thousands of children are being sent to the Soviet Union for education and ideological training. Yet, after seven years, the Soviets are still unable to create a regime that can gain public support -- and, in fact, just last week dumped Babrak Karmal, who they brought in from exile in Moscow after the KGB assassinated his predecessor. Afghanis drafted into government military service use the first opportunity to desert or defect, often to the Mujahedin freedom fighters. Despite horrendous losses and incredible suffering, the Mujahedin have fought the Soviets to a standoff over seven years and are daily increasing their military capability and the cost of the war to the Soviets.

Indeed, a new phenomenon that Soviets have faced in recent years is that they find themselves on the defensive, supporting high cost, long term efforts to maintain in power repressive regimes they have installed or coopted in Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Mozambique, South Yemen and Nicaragua. Taken together, nearly half a million resistance fighters have taken up arms against some 400,000 Soviet, Vietnamese and Cuban troops occupying these countries.

The Soviets' aggressive strategy in the Third World has, in my view, four ultimate targets -- first, the oil fields of the Middle East which are the life line of the West and Japan;

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second, the Isthmus and Canal of Panama between North and South America; and, third, the mineral wealth of Southern Africa. Afghanistan, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam, and Mozambique and Angola in Southern Africa bring Soviet power much closer to the sources of oil and minerals on which the industrial nations depend and put Soviet naval and air power astride the sea lanes which carry those resources to America, Europe and Japan. The fourth target is the West itself -- to use conflict in the Third World to exploit divisions in the Alliance and to try to recreate the internal divisions caused by Vietnam in order to weaken the Western response and provoke disagreement over larger national security and defense policies.

Terrorism

Let me now turn to terrorism. Terrorism, including state supported terrorism, is not a new phenomenon. Unhappily, it is a familiar fact of life in the internal affairs of too many countries -- as well as in nearly all wars. Even so, terrorist murder in peacetime of innocent bystanders -- men, women and children -- is very rare in the West and it is especially frightening when perpetrated by states and causes remote from us. And when it becomes the primary means of waging war for smaller states, it becomes a real danger. Growing out of the Lebanese Civil War and the overthrow of the Shah, support for terrorism by Syria, Libya and Iran has become a significant and lethal component of international terrorism and has become an

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established instrument of foreign policy of those and other countries.

At the same time, looming in the background of Middle Eastern terrorism -- and terrorism elsewhere as well -- are the Soviet Union and the states of Eastern Europe. Let there be no mistake or ambiguity about it: the Soviet Union supports terrorism. It has directly and indirectly trained, funded, armed and even operationally assisted terrorist organizations such as Fatah, Abu Nidal and others. Nearly every terrorist group in the Middle East has links to the USSR or one of its clients. Just by way of example:

-- In 1982 Israel found in the PLO camps in Lebanon nearly three dozen Soviet tanks, Soviet antiaircraft guns, armored personnel carriers, multiple rocket launchers, 1200 anti-tank weapons, and more than 28,000 small caliber weapons.

-- In the 1970s, Turkish officials uncovered in the hands of Turkish terrorists thousands of Czech CZ-75 pistols, Polish submachine guns, Hungarian pistols -- and in 1981 they found Soviet bazookas, AK-47 rifles and F-1 hand grenades.

-- Elsewhere, the M-19 terrorists who attached the Palace of Justice in Bogota, Colombia a year ago were armed

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with US M-16 rifles which we left in Vietnam. Cuba was the source of the large quantities of weapons recently found cached for terrorists in Northern Chile. Again, weapons we abandoned in Vietnam. And I could go on.

It is this umbrella of Soviet support, and the associated role of Soviet clients such as Syria, Libya, Vietnam and Nicaragua that allows large scale terrorist operations to continue. And, finally, in addition to their support of these groups, the Soviets refuse to play any role in international efforts to curtail terrorism.

It has not been lost on the Soviets that the practitioners of terrorism who make spectacular strikes against the West by bending or redefining the rules -- as in Lebanon -- are finding ways past the West's defenses, both physical and psychological. This has allure -- and is a good line of attack -- for Moscow in a world when nuclear and conventional military balances change slowly and where Soviet economic, political and ideological power is stunted. Such an attitude toward terrorism is not surprising given the fundamental role that terrorism played in the establishment of Soviet power and the conduct of its policy. One of those who led the revolution, Trotsky, said that the revolution "kills individuals and intimidates thousands" -- it is necessary to kill some in order shatter the will of the rest. No one in the intervening 65 years has found a better statement of the purpose of terror at home or abroad.

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Conclusions: What is to be Done

As we reflect on the last forty years of war, subversion, instability and terrorism in the Third World, it is clear that the Soviet Union and its surrogates have played and are continuing to play a major role. Their involvement is a common feature as is their ability relentlessly to sustain their participation over many years. It is imperative that, at long last, Americans recognize the strategic significance of this Soviet offensive -- that it is in reality, a war, a war waged between nations and against Western influence and presence, against economic development and against the growth of democratic values. It is war without declaration, without mobilization, without massive armies. It is, in fact, that long twilight war described nearly a quarter century ago by President Kennedy.

What then are we to do? From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan, our Presidents have recognized the importance of this struggle in the Third World -- some sooner than others. But public and Congressional understanding and support have waxed and waned. What we need is a vigorous strategy we can sustain in a struggle Secretary Shultz has said is "the prime challenge we will face, at least through the remainder of this century." I would like to suggest several steps, none of them new, and many of them in train now, that should be integrated into a

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strategy to meet the long term Soviet challenge and promote democracy and freedom in the Third World.

1. First, Congress and the Executive Branch, Republicans and Democrats, must collaborate more closely in the setting of strategy. There seems to be more agreement on the nature of the threat than on what to do about it. Cooperation and support in recent years has been good in some areas; not so good in others. There have been close calls and too often prolonged delays in getting help to our friends. Too often in the past, opportunities to counter the Soviets have been lost by clashes between the two Branches, or by partisan politics. If common understanding of the Soviet challenge in the Third World cannot be translated into a program of action that can be counted on for more than a year at a time, if that, we will have little success. At the same time, those who would lay claim to a constructive role in protecting our interests and advancing stability and freedom in the Third World cannot oppose overt military action and covert action and at the same time also reject security assistance and economic assistance for key countries. The United States must have some means to help our friends in the Third World defend themselves and grow economically, and support for those means must be bipartisan and stable.

2. Second, more must be done to educate the public, the Congress, and Third World governments about Soviet strategy in

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the Third World. A continuing information program to inform and tie together developments in areas widely distant is needed and must be pursued over a long term.

3. We must, as a country, give priority to learning more about developments in the Third World and to providing early warning of economic, social, and political problems that foreshadow instability and opportunities for exploitation by the USSR or its clients. We should serve as a clearing house of information useful to threatened countries, for example, seeing to it that lessons learned in successful counterinsurgencies or economic development programs are shared.

4. The US must establish priorities in terms of major commitments. If our early help fails to prevent serious trouble, for which countries are we prepared to put our chips on the table? Also, I believe we should at least try to make such choices in consultation with key members of Congress so that their support at crucial moments is more likely. Great losing battles in Congress for foreign military sales or economic assistance for important Third World friends, played out on the world stage and at critical times, represent devastating setbacks for the US with ramifications going far beyond the affected country.

5. We must be -- and are -- prepared to demand firmly, but tactfully and privately, that our friends observe certain

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standards of behavior with regard to basic human rights. It is required by our own principles and essential to political support in the US. Moreover, we have to be -- and are -- willing to talk straight to those we would help about issues they must address to block Soviet and other foreign exploitation of their problems -- issues such as land reform and corruption. We have a right and a responsibility to condition our support -- but must do so in ways that make it possible politically for the recipient to comply.

6. We need to change our approach to foreign military sales so that the US can provide arms more quickly to our friends in need -- provide them the tools to do the job -- and to do so without hanging out all their dirty linen for the world to see. It does not serve any rational purpose to humiliate those whom we would help.

7. Covert action can be used, as in the past, to create problems for hostile governments, and to provide discreet help to friendly organizations and governments. Indeed, at times it may be the only means we have to help them.

8. We must be prepared to use overt military forces where circumstances are appropriate, as in Grenada and Libya.

9. We must find a way to mobilize and use our greatest asset in the Third World -- private business. No one in the

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Third World wants to adopt the Soviet economic system. Neither we nor the Soviets can offer unlimited or even large-scale economic assistance to the Third World. Investment is the key to economic success or at least survival in the Third World and we, our NATO allies and Japan need to develop a common strategy to promote investment in the Third World. The Soviets are helpless to compete with private capital in these countries.

10. Finally, we need to have a strategy supported with consistency through more than one Presidency. This Administration and Congress in recent years have gone further than any of their predecessors in developing and sustaining a coherent strategy. But more must be done, and it must endure. After all, we now face a Soviet leader who could be in power well into the 21st century.

We are engaged in a historic struggle with the Soviet Union, a struggle between age-old tyranny -- to use an old fashioned word -- and the concept that the highest goal of the State is to protect and foster the creative capabilities and liberties of the individual. The battle lines are most sharply drawn in the Third World. We have enormous assets and advantages in this struggle. We offer an economic model based on private enterprise for long term development, independence, stability, and prosperity. We offer a model of freedom and democratic ideals; we offer religious tolerance and spiritual values; and we have democratic allies willing to help. As the

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President has said, we welcome the democratic revolution in the Third World and are committed to promoting national independence and popular rule. In contrast, the Soviet Union offers only a model police state, a new form of colonial subservience, the morality of the gun, and the austerity of totalitarian socialism.

Our experience over the last forty years makes clear that Soviet aggression and subversion in the Third World cannot be stopped by negotiation alone (if at all); it must be resisted -- politically, economically and militarily.

As a country, we must develop realistic policies, public support for those policies and make the long term investment essential to a constructive role in helping to bring peace, stability, prosperity and freedom to the Third World. The East-West struggle to influence the future of the Third World is a classic confrontation of the Soviet capacity to destroy arrayed against the democratic nations' capacity to build. Americans cannot and must not be indifferent to the outcome.

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